

A day as a Hackman.

'Heigh ho, McGreer! What in the world are you swearing about there so furiously?' I asked, entering the livery stable of the above named person, amid a volley of oaths that might have shocked the Satanic majesty.

'Oh! good morning,' replied the man; 'excuse me Mr. Morris. I was talking rather too strong, perhaps; but the fact is, I am in a desperate strait! You see, Mr. Elmore's horses are both sick, and he wants me to let him have my best span and coach immediately. Well, the dapples are the best, and to my eye, better than his own; but there's not a man belonging to my stable dare drive them but Cary, and he is down with the fever. The other horses are all out or engaged, and I don't know what to do—'

'There, there,' said I, 'no oaths. I have nothing on hand, and really believe I should like to play hackman for a day in New York.'

'Surely, Mr. Morris, you are joking,' ejaculated the man, in amazement.

'No; I am in earnest; for the idea was so novel, that I, a lover of adventure, became every moment more determined to try it.'

'I am in earnest, Mr. McGreer, say no more about it. You know I can manage anything. Just have them hitched up, and give me the livery coat and hat. Now, leave me in the office for a moment—but stop! don't let the men know who I am, and by the way—I almost forgot it—have our team sent around in about an hour.'

Left alone, I proceeded to alter my appearance as much as possible, assuming the habiliments of a driver, I made a first-rate Irishman of the higher grade. The metamorphosis was scarcely completed when Mr. McGreer entered.

'Mr. Mor—'

'Michael, ye mane,' I interrupted; 'sure there's no reason that I should be cheated out of a name.' We both laughed, and I received congratulations upon making a good son of Erin.

Stepping out of the office, I mounted the box, gathered up the reins, and was off. The horses were unusually gay, but I had them in good trim by the time I stopped before Mr. Elmore's residence. It may be well to state, Grace Elmore was not the least indignant for assuming my present position. All winter she had been a dream of mine, or rather half a one, for I could not really decide which I preferred, Grace or Maude de Morris, a young French lady, who was spending the winter in New York with her parents. Both were bewitching, and I embraced every opportunity of being with either.

Springing from the box, I rang the bell, and presently assisted Miss Elmore and her two friends into the carriage.

The day was warm for March, and the four windows were open—Grace sitting on the seat nearest me.

'Round the pleasant streets, driver. Anywhere for a ride,' she said.

We started, and for a quarter of an hour the ladies' chat was of no account to me, when suddenly Miss Fanny exclaimed:

'By the way, Grace, rumor says you are engaged to George Morris, and the solitary on your fore-finger appears to confirm it.'

'Rumor honors me,' was the reply.

'Now, Grace, chimed in the third lady, 'stop your nonsense, and tell us candidly, are you engaged?'

'Well, I am arraigned before a court for some terrible crime, and commanded to answer, guilty or not guilty?—is that it?' was the half laughing, half annoyed response.

'No,' replied the third lady, 'only to gratify friendly curiosity.'

'Well, the truth is, I am not at liberty to say all I wish; but this much I will acknowledge—the ring you mentioned did once belong to George Morris.'

Was there ever such an abominable falsehood told, every word of which is true? I thought angrily, as I heard the comments upon my money, person, parents, etc. That girl has led them to suppose that we are engaged, and there is a ring to prove it—a ring she took from me in sport, a few evenings since, and which I intended to recover upon our next meeting. Well, there is one thing certain, Grace Elmore will never be my wife. I could not trust such a schemer. My resolution was strengthened when I heard her say in confidential undertone, to the one lady, Miss Fannie having left at her own house:

'I have, of course, no feelings in the matter, only a school girl's love; but I think that George would make a most desirable husband, while his wealth, with my own, will place us above any change of fortune. Then he is very handsome, and I have decided to take him. I don't know that I could do much better.'

'Pity I have not arrived at a similar conclusion,' was my mental sarcasm.

Just then she called affectionately, home, driver.'

Willingly did I place her on the carriage steps and turn towards the stable.

'By Jove! I wish I could have as good a chance to try Maude de Morris,' I ejaculated, as I drove up to my station. McGreer was waiting for me. There was a gray-haired gentleman with him, but McGreer stepped aside and asked me if I objected to going further, at the same time overpowering me with thanks, and saying if the horses were cooled down he could give them to some one else.

'No, no,' I replied quickly, for I was desirous of learning more of humanity, I will keep my place for the present; send me where you choose.—Turning to the gentleman, McGreer bowed and said, 'Mr. Lancy, this carriage is at your disposal.'

In Mr. Lancy I recognized a worthy merchant, though not well known in higher circles, his means placing him only with those who were in very good circumstances.

'Where?' I asked, as he entered the carriage.

'To—street, north side.'

A quiet, easy little place it proved to be—a three-story brick, new and handsome, though lacking elegance.—Here the gentleman alighted, returning in a short time, accompanied by a young girl of, I should judge, some nineteen years, whom he addressed as Maggie. Her rich brown hair was curled neatly at the back of her head, and the soft, violet looking, hazel eyes were the most enchanting that ever met my gaze. Peering from under my hat, I noted every article of dress of the neatly robed little fairy. 'Drive to the Park,' was the gentleman's direction, as I again took up the reins.

I listened eagerly for every sound within, feeling half ashamed of the part I was playing, though too deeply interested in the lady to desist.

Presently a clear and sweet voice asked:

'Well, father dear, what have you to say that you require such strict privacy?'

'My child, I—I fear you are not brave enough to hear it! Oh! spare me! Heaven, if I could only spare my darling!'

An eager, loving voice replied:

'Father! father! surely one so young and strong, with such deep love for you, can bear a great deal; and sorrow will not be so heavy when shared with me. Now that mother has no power to comfort you except through memory, let me take her precious place as best I can. Tell me all, father, I am stronger than you think.'

Then followed a long explanation, which may be summed up in a very few words. Their voices were often drowned in the outer bustle, but I heard sufficient to understand that Mr. Lancy, who was doing a very heavy business, had, several months previous, taken a partner, who proved to be an inveterate speculator, and, without the knowledge of Mr. Lancy, had involved the firm to the amount of several thousand dollars. The investments could amount to nothing in less than a year; meanwhile debts previously incurred fell due and were pressed by creditors. Mr. Lancy ended by saying:

'Unless I get some assistance between this and Monday night, Tuesday night will find us penniless. Oh, my child! if I could but save you! How can you bear such a change?'

And I heard the heavy sobs of that strong man come thick and fast. There were a few drops in my own eyes, for I could not see the horses for a moment. I fancied loving arms around his neck, and a pale soft cheek against his own, as the words I had to lean down to catch came in a clear, brave voice from the noblest heart that beat 'neath Heaven.

'Father, do not think of me; all that I have is yours, and many private articles will bring considerable. Do not shrink from selling everything to pay an honest debt. I can bear all things so that love is left. Surely, I may not complain if it all be taken, if Heaven leaves me my father. Do your best and trust me for all the assistance in my power. I can bear all things so long as love is left.'

Much followed, but this was all I cared to hear, and by the time we drove up before the neat house in—street, I fairly worshipped the brown haired angel who reigned there.

For the last fifteen minutes I had been contriving a plan to assist them. In my pocket was a check for three hundred dollars, drawn that morning for the purpose of settling a small account.

My name was on it in full, and as I opened the carriage door I cast it to the wind, which took it to the pavement. At first neither noticed it, and I feared that I had been foiled, but just as I was mounting the box, Maggie picked it up, and turned hurriedly to

her father. I drove off wondering how it would end.

Reaching the stables, I threw the reins to the hostler, and entering the office, told McGreer the horses could be driven by a baby; disposed of my masquerade, and went home, not to dream of Grace and Maude, as usual, but of the noble woman who 'could bear all things, so long as love was left.'

The next morning I saw in the Herald a notice which read as follows:

'If Mr. George T. Morris will call at No. 4 North—street, he will recover lost property.'

It was just what I wanted, and about ten o'clock I called at the place above named, receiving the check from my queen, together with an explanation of how it came into her possession. I asked if her father was at home. He was not.

Would she give me his place of business?

'Certainly.' Taking a card from the stand, she traced neatly the address, and bowing, I left her to seek the merchant.

'Mr. Lancy, I am George Morris. Will you grant me a private interview?'

'With pleasure.'

Seated in the inner office, I told him all the last day's proceedings that concerned himself, offering any pecuniary assistance he might permit me to render. After some urging on my part, he accepted, and grasping my hand, thanked me again for saving his child, saying Heaven would repay me.

And it has, most munificently; for not six months passed ere Maggie Lancy possessed the solitaire which Grace Elmore had worn so proudly and falsely. I have secured the greatest treasure earth can give—a woman who can bear all things, so long as love is left.'

Now two hazel eyes are peering over my shoulder, while a happy voice exclaims:

'Why, George, you foolish old darling, no one will be interested in that but yourself.'

Is my little wife correct?

The Hide Dealer's Sign.

The proprietor of a tan yard, adjacent to a certain town in Virginia, concluded to build a stand, or sort of store, on one corner of the main streets, for the purpose of vending his leather, buying raw hides, and the like. After completing his building, he began to consider what sort of a sign it would be best to put up for the purpose of attracting attention to his new establishment; and for days and weeks he was sorely puzzled on this subject.—Several devices were, one after another, adopted and, on further consideration, rejected.

At last a happy idea struck him.—He bored an augur hole through the door post, and stuck a calf's tail into it, with the bushy end flaunting out. After a while, he noticed a grave looking personage standing near the door with his spectacles, gazing intently on the sign. And there he still continued to stand, dumbly absorbed, gazing and gazing, until the curiosity of the hide dealer was greatly excited in turn. He stepped out and addressed the individual:

'Good morning,' said he.

'Morning,' said the other, without moving his eyes from the sign.

'Do you want to buy leather?' inquired the dealer.

'No.'

'Do you want to sell hides?'

'No.'

'Perhaps you are a farmer?'

'No.'

'A merchant, maybe?'

'No.'

'Are you a doctor?'

'No.'

'What are you, then?'

'I am a philosopher. I have been standing here for an hour, trying to ascertain how that calf got through that augur hole.'

Why He Done It.—At the theatre one night John Phoenix thought he saw an acquaintance sitting a few seats in front, and asked a gentleman between them to poke him with his cane. When he turned round John discovered his mistake. Fixing his attention to the play, and effecting indifference of the whole affair, he left the man with cane to settle the disturbance, and he being without an excuse, there was of course, a ludicrous and embarrassing scene, during all of which Phoenix was profoundly interested in the play. At last the man asked indignantly:

'Did you tell me to poke that man with the stick?'

'Yes.'

'And what did you want?'

'I wanted to see whether you would poke him or not.'

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